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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

25 APR 1956

INDEXED-61

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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable J. Edgar Hoover
Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

SUBJECT: Brainwashing [redacted]

The attached study on brainwashing was prepared by my staff in response to the increasingly acute interest in the subject throughout the intelligence and security components of the Government. I feel you will find it well worth your personal attention. It represents the thinking of leading psychologists, psychiatrists and intelligence specialists, based in turn on interviews with many individuals who have had personal experience with Communist brainwashing, and on extensive research and testing. While individual specialists hold divergent views on various aspects of this most complex subject, I believe the study reflects a synthesis of majority expert opinion. I will, of course, appreciate any comments on it that you or your staff may have.

[redacted]

EX-122

Allen W. Dulles
Director

ENCLOSURE

Attachment:
CSDB-37286

62-60750-280

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

BRAINWASHING

from

A Psychological Viewpoint

February 1956

L. Bodyansky

J. Ostrand

W. Bradshaw

R. Simpson

CONFIDENTIAL

"We know now that men can be made to do exactly anything..... It's all a question of finding the right means. If only we take enough trouble and go sufficiently slowly, we can make him kill his aged parents and eat them in a stew."
(Jules Romains. VERDUN. A.A. Knopf, 1939, P. 156.)

This study should not be read as representing the synthesis in the Central Intelligence Agency on the subject of brainwashing. Several working groups in CIA are actively concerned with the subject, and this paper reflects the progress so far made by only one of those groups. It is not a final report.

62-81756-502

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FOREWORD

Brainwashing, as a term, was originated by a reporter who was interviewing Chinese refugees. It has gained world-wide currency and has been applied to a wide range of techniques--mass education of a Communistic country or citizens, thought control in Soviet and satellite countries, techniques of eliciting information, as well as the intensive individualized re-education of beliefs of a few selected individuals. Such uncritical use of the term has done nothing to reduce the impact on the public and officialdom generally of the confessions of such men as Cardinal Mindszenty and especially of the results of treatment of prisoners-of-war by the Chinese Communists.

The term itself is anxiety producing. Its connotation of special oriental knowledge of drugs, hypnosis, and other exotic and devious means of controlling human behavior creates credulity among the uninformed. A more prosaic view is that the techniques used in producing confessions and "conversions" are readily understandable in terms of ordinary psychological principles and have been used, especially by police states, for centuries. It is now clear that Russian methods of

obtaining information and confessions have been developed by MVD and earlier versions of this organization over the centuries, but especially during the past 35 years of systematic effort to elicit information or confessions. The Chinese have their own tradition of tolerance for brutality. They are influenced by the Russians, but place more emphasis on converting the prisoner to Communistic beliefs, at times behaving as typical "eager-beaver" revolutionaries. In sum, the methods are police methods developed by trial and error to suit the needs of the police state. No scientists, no drugs, no hypnosis, no new psychological principles have as yet been involved.

Early in the review of the diverse information catalogued under the term "brainwashing", even in serious scientific articles, it became evident there was a need for better coordination of the work on this topic and more work directed at specific problems and issues. It was, therefore, concluded that this limited effort was best devoted to (1) clarifying the concepts connoted by the term brainwashing; (2) relating these to such basic psychological principles as learning, perception, and motivation; and (3) specifically discussing the brainwashed person as an involuntarily re-educated person.

All people are being re-educated continuously. New information changes one's beliefs. Everyone has experienced to

some degree the conflict that ensues when new information is not consistent with a prior belief, especially a basic one concerned with such problems as religion, sex mores, and political ideology. This is a normal experience. Most individuals are able to resolve the conflict by one means or another; many do so by integrating the new with the old.

The experience of the brainwashed (in our sense) differs in that the inconsistent information is forced upon him under relatively controlled conditions after the possibility of critical judgment has been reduced or removed by such measures as production of excessive fatigue, isolation, deprivation of various sorts, and sometimes physical torture. When reduced to extreme dependency and confusion, the individual is ready to react favorably to any person or idea which promises to end his painfully confused state. At this point, the re-education begins, as described in the ANALYSIS OF CONTROL PRESSURES.

How individuals will react to attempts to elicit information, to confess falsely, to brainwashing as we have defined it depends on the intelligence, personality and experience of the individual and on the knowledge and willingness of captors to persist in techniques aimed at

deliberately destroying the integration of a personality. With such willingness, there appears little doubt that an individual can be brought psychologically to the point where involuntary re-education will take place. Up to now, police methods developed by trial and error have not fully exploited the psychological basis for results thus far obtained; nor have all restraints in treatment of prisoners been cast aside. Note, too, that the restraints referred to need not concern direct physical torture. It is not necessary to use direct physical means to reduce a person to a state where involuntary re-education can take place.

Brainwashing conceived as involuntary re-education, then, represents one extreme of a continuum of treatment by, and resistance to, captors. At the other end of this scale is active voluntary collaboration with the enemy. In between are varying degrees of brutality and subtlety of treatment and degrees of resistance thereto. Clearly, policies concerning treatment of repatriated captives will depend on where the individual is placed on this scale. At one end, there is the legal jurisdiction for treason; at the other, psychiatric treatment.

The view presented herein has several implications. First, the public should be given information which will

dispel the mystery which appears to have surrounded the concept of brainwashing.

Second, those responsible for establishing policy for returned prisoners have as a first problem the determination where on the scale between involuntary re-education and voluntary collaboration a particular individual stands.

Third, the human organism need not be a complete pawn of his environment until extreme conditions are created. Man is adaptive, and with some knowledge of what to expect from his captors and an understanding of his own reactions, he can develop means of resisting. He can be helped in this by prior knowledge of the treatment he can expect and his own reactions to it.

Fourth, the truly brainwashed is a psychiatric, not a legal problem. His treatment should be therapeutic, not punitive. Recovery can be anticipated since the brainwashed person placed in his normal environment will tend to revert to his prior beliefs.

Fifth, brainwashing can be successfully accomplished on the basis of present knowledge by anyone sufficiently interested in acquiring an understanding of the psychological principles involved.

Sixth, it is possible that the best long range defense

against brainwashing is to make it politically disadvantageous for a country to permit its use.

While this paper focuses its attention on brainwashing as defined, the political nature of its effects makes it necessary to consider the effects of military and other policy. Where certain possibilities occur naturally in the psychological context, they are mentioned. The major purpose, however, is to discuss brainwashing from a psychological point of view. It is not presumed that this view takes into account all the factors needed in determining policy.

INTRODUCTION

Scope and Aim

The purpose of this study is to increase understanding of the "brainwashing process".

There are probably well over 1000 classified and unclassified documents, articles and books directly related to Soviet and Satellite techniques of interrogation and brainwashing. Approximately one-third of the available classified and unclassified sources were examined to provide the findings of this study.

By far the greatest proportion of this material has come from prisoner-of-war sources of World War II and the Korean conflict. Considerable additional material has come from refugees, intelligence sources, and civilian nationals who have been released from incarceration behind the Curtain.

A number of research studies have been completed or are now in process by various agencies of this Government and other friendly governments. The obtainable findings of all research studies of immediate relevance were utilized.

A considerable body of professional research dealing with conditions that result in changes in the perceptual and

intellectual organization of the individual personality has emanated from universities and other private research institutions during the past decade. Appropriate selections from this material have been applied to understanding brainwashing.

General Orientation

This study has been written as a general analysis of the available material. It is recognized that agencies engaged in intelligence collection have unique operational vulnerabilities in dealing with Soviet interrogation and brainwashing. Individuals forced to confess to having engaged in espionage or sabotage embarrass national policy planners. While these problems are recognized, no attempt has been made in this study to provide specific practical guidance.

This study is written from the viewpoint of professional psychology. As a systematic approach, this has not been done before, although many previous analyses have, of course, made some use of psychological ideas. The present approach attempts to make full use of current psychological principles in explaining the process of brainwashing.

It is reasonable to expect that the Soviets will continue to refine their methods, and that we shall continue to secure more knowledge about the subject. There should, therefore, be periodic reappraisals of brainwashing in the future.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As we shall show later in this chapter, the term "brainwashing" has a very useful meaning from the standpoint of what goes on inside the person who is brainwashed. If the process had been viewed in this light from the beginning, no doubt we would by now have achieved a greater and more widespread understanding of it. Actually, it has not been confronted in so simple a manner as that. It has been used by the Soviets and the Chinese on quite different kinds of people and for quite a variety of reasons. It has had a wide range of consequences, some intended and perhaps some unintended. It has faced intelligence, military and political leaders with a remarkably wide range of problems with which each such group had to cope. All these variations of objectives, consequences, and problems have made for confusion in our efforts to understand what was really going on.

Western usage of the term brainwashing has caused it to be applied from time to time to each of the following situations:

(1) Individual or group indoctrination of the "masses" behind the Iron Curtain.

(2) Indoctrination of key personnel inside Communist-controlled countries to maintain their political reliability.

(3) The interrogation process by which positive information of intelligence value is obtained from individuals.

(4) Group indoctrination of prisoners-of-war. Besides an attempt to obtain defections and demoralize military personnel, this process appears to have been used as a selective device to ascertain which "progressives" or "opportunists" might subsequently be amenable to a more intensive process as defined in (5) below.

(5) The intensive individual process during which individuals are deprived of their critical faculties and subsequently come to believe as true that which, prior to the brainwashing, they would have designated as false.

The fact that the term "brainwashing" has been applied to so many situations has caused a great deal of confusion in attempting to learn more about it and in attempting to develop sound practices and policies for coping with it. As we shall explain more fully in this study, we find the term "brainwashing" to be most useful when it is applied strictly to denote the involuntary re-education of an individual during which a change is developed in the perceptual and intellectual organization of his personality so that he will:

(1) Accept as true certain ideological principles which he would not have accepted as true prior to the change, and/or

(2) Admit that certain events have a true and factual basis which he would not have admitted formerly. These false beliefs may be transitory. In fact, there is good reason to believe that the false beliefs resulting from brainwashing will break down spontaneously when the individual has been removed for a period of time from the oppressive controls.

It should be noted that brainwashing, so defined, does not emphasize what happens to the individual, but what happens within him. The change represents a more or less complete re-education of his value-system. This change is brought about in a rigidly controlled environment using pressures designed to create and sharpen internal conflict within the individual. The individual is forced to resort to problem-solving behavior, and the net effect is the brainwashed state. Two simultaneous processes are present. The first is characterized by a progressive deterioration and demobilization of the individual's critical and judging capacities. In a true sense the individual loses all sense of perspective. The second process is the learning of beliefs he would previously have

rejected, as he seeks to gain some structure for his crumbling personality. The criteria of success of brainwashing are:

(1) The observed conviction and sincerity with which the individual expresses his changed ideology and beliefs concerning palpable events.

(2) The length of time his changed beliefs are maintained after the individual has been removed from the control environment.

(3) The amount of surprise and confusion that accompanies his "discovery" that he has been brainwashed during his subsequent recovery.

Indoctrination, and even education, can lead to false beliefs. These processes are most effective when the individual has gaps in his knowledge, or his understanding of the meaning of certain events is sufficiently tenuous that he has little difficulty in accepting a new and different interpretation. Brainwashing, however, involves the re-education of well-established beliefs; and implies that the individual resisted the re-education. It is this very resistance with its concomitant internal conflict, we maintain, which is the very core of brainwashing.

In the process of securing information of intelligence value, the procedures used by the Communists, although

admittedly harsh, do not appear to differ substantially from those customarily used in eliciting military information. The systematic demoralization of captives does not appear to be a major objective.

An understanding of brainwashing is important in several contexts, among which are the following:

(1) Intelligence might be more fully protected if military and other personnel subject to capture could understand brainwashing and could be trained as well as possible to cope with it.

(2) Dealing properly with brainwashed individuals depends heavily on understanding their condition. For the truly brainwashed, psychiatric treatment is in order; for the deliberate defector, legal processes are appropriate.

(3) The propaganda-value of false confessions has been great, and the fear-producing impact of "brainwashing" in the public mind is a matter worth considerable concern. Public understanding of the process should help considerably.

(4) A clear understanding of the process is important if governmental agencies are to make rapid progress toward further research and understanding, and

to develop consistent policies to meet the problems of brainwashing.

Each of these objectives of greater understanding is important. The propaganda-value of false confessions and the public anxiety concerning brainwashing loom, however, as major preoccupations. Statements of brainwashed individuals have been a sharp-edged tool in the Communist propaganda kit. Everything from the purges of the brainwashed "old revolutionaries" in the late '30's to the Korean germ warfare admissions has advanced the Soviet strategy line. Possibly one of the greatest advantages for the Communists in the Far East has been to lower Caucasian prestige. Another and even more effective propaganda goal may be the creation of a state of fear within the populace of western-bloc nations. The concept of brainwashing is frightening. Mothers of sons, who go into military service against the Soviets or Chinese, must concern themselves with the fact, not only that their sons may be killed or wounded, but that their mental processes may be distorted if they are captured. Just as knowledge that the Soviets have thermonuclear weapons has dampened the national feeling of security, so brainwashing has created the belief that our opponents are mysteriously formidable. The "man-in-the-street" is not so removed from pre-scientific

beliefs that such processes as brainwashing fail to arouse emotions bordering on superstitious awe.

We turn now to a more detailed explanation of just what happens to the mind and body of the demoralized and disorganized person who can properly be described as brainwashed, and to a consideration of how this state can be brought about. We shall describe the general processes involved in changing the behavior and the beliefs of an individual when his environment can be fully controlled. These processes are complex and they involve the basic principles of learning, perception, motivation, and physiological deprivation.

Implications of these findings for policy and practice in various areas will not be spelled out in detail. Some such implications, of course, would need to be integrated with other considerations in arriving at a final policy. Some, on the other hand, appear to point overwhelmingly toward certain specific policies and practices. For example, the treatment of brainwashed repatriates should clearly be supportive rather than punitive. This study should provide useful guidance and helpful points of view in a number of important areas.

COMMUNIST CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Understanding brainwashing as a phenomenon -- a phenomenon which culminates in a false confession, delivered with conviction and humility, to antisocial intent and specific criminal acts -- requires both a knowledge of Communist control techniques and an analysis of their impact upon the normal personality. This section describes the battery of pressures applied to the prisoner and his behavioral reactions to these control pressures. In the following section an attempt is made to analyze the psychological impact of these assaults upon the personality during the course of the brainwashing.

The Suspect

Those who fall under the suspicion of the MVD usually have some reason for exciting its suspicion. Although the suspect may not know why he is suspected, the MVD has some reason for singling him out. Because of the broad nature of Soviet laws, and the free manner in which the MVD can interpret these, any "suspect" has committed some "crime against the state" as the MVD defines the term.

The implications of this statement are significant. In a nation in which the state owns all property, where everyone

works for the state, and where only approved opinions may be held, a person who has accidentally broken or lost some of the "people's property", who has made a mistake, who has not worked hard enough, who has talked to a foreigner, or who has merely expressed what he inferred was an innocent opinion, may be ipso facto guilty of a "crime against the state." In practice, this means that almost anyone within the Soviet Union may be suspected by the MVD at any time, and that whenever he is suspected the MVD is always able to assign a specific reason for its suspicions.

The Accumulation of Evidence

According to Communist ideology, no one may be arrested unless there is evidence that he is a criminal.

According to the practice of the MVD this means that when an individual falls under the suspicion of an MVD officer, this officer must accumulate "evidence" that the individual is a "criminal" and take this evidence to the state prosecutor, who must then issue a warrant before the arrest can be carried out. The investigating officer accumulates evidence showing that the victim had a reason to be a criminal (i.e., that he was a member of a suspect group) by accumulating the statements of spies and informants with regard to him. If this evidence is not sufficient to satisfy the officer he places

the suspect and his friends and associates under surveillance. These friends and associates may be arrested and held for interrogation in order to supply evidence against the suspect, the reason for their arrest being that they are associates of a suspect, and therefore suspect themselves.

Covert surveillance and the arrest of associates are carried out carefully, but they cannot always be concealed from the suspect. He may become aware of it or his friends may tell him. As he becomes a marked man in the eyes of his friends, they begin to avoid him. Their demeanor sometimes indicates to him that he is under suspicion. The knowledge that he will be arrested, without knowledge of when this will occur, obviously creates anxiety in the intended victim. Although MVD officers know about the psychological effect which surveillance has upon suspects, and make use of it, they probably do not use it with the calculated cunning that the victim sometimes supposes. The poorly concealed surveillance and the arrest of friends and associates, followed by an indefinite period before the arrest of the main suspect, are not necessarily stage maneuvers to frighten the victim. They are often evidences of rather slow and clumsy police activities.

Members of the MVD compete with each other in trying to turn up suspects and secure their conviction. To a certain

extent, officers are judged by the number of arrests which they obtain. Since Communist theory demands that no person be arrested except when it is clear that he is a criminal, officers who arrest men who must later be released are subject to censure. They have made a mistake, because they have arrested a man who is not a criminal.

The consequences are important from the point of view of the victim. In effect, any man who is arrested is automatically in the position of being guilty. Anyone arrested by the MVD must know that in the eyes of the Soviet state, and in the eyes of those who have arrested him, he is a "criminal". The only question to be settled after the arrest is the extent of his criminal activity and the precise nature of his crimes. The officers in charge of his case, both those who have made the arrest and those who will carry out the interrogation, have a personal interest in seeing that the arrested man makes a prompt and extensive confession, for their own reputations are at stake.

The Arrest Procedure

According to Communist theory, men should be arrested in such manner as not to cause them embarrassment, and the police should carry out arrests in a manner which does not unduly disturb the population. For more than twenty years it has been

the practice of the Russian State Police to seize their suspects in the middle of the night. The "midnight knock on the door" has become a standard episode in fiction about Russia. The police are well aware of the fact that the intended victim, forewarned by his previous surveillance and the changing attitude of his friends, is further terrified by the thought that he may be awakened from his sleep almost any night and taken away. It is customary for the arresting officer to be accompanied by several other men. He usually reads to the prisoner the arrest warrant if there is one. It does not, of course, specify the details of the crimes committed. The prisoner is then taken promptly to a detention prison.

The Detention Prison

In most of the large cities of the Soviet Union the MVD operates detention prisons. These prisons contain only persons under "investigation", whose cases have not yet been settled. The most modern of these prisons are separate institutions, well built and spotlessly clean. In addition to the cells for the prisoners, they contain offices for the MVD units, rooms in which interrogations are carried out, and other rooms, usually in the basement, in which prisoners are executed when such punishment is decided upon. There are attached medical facilities, and rooms for the care of the sick detainees. An exercise yard is a standard facility.

The typical cell is a small cubicle, about 10 feet long by 6 feet wide, containing a single bunk and a slop jar. It usually has no other furnishings. Its walls are barren, and it is lighted by a single electric lamp in the ceiling. One wall usually contains a small window above eye level, from which the prisoner can see nothing of his outside environment. The door contains a peephole through which the guard in the corridor outside may observe the prisoner at will without the prisoner's knowledge. Such typical cells will not, of course, be found in all prisons and especially not in those which are old or improvised, but the general aspect of barrenness and complete lack of access to the outside world is characteristic.

The Regimen Within the Detention Prison

The arresting officers usually do not give the prisoner the reason for his arrest beyond that in the warrant which they read to him. They usually search him and also search the place in which he lives. They then take him directly to the prison. Here he is asked a few questions about his identity, and personal valuables and his outer clothing are taken from him. These are carefully catalogued and put away. He may or may not be given a prison uniform. He is usually examined by a prison physician shortly after his incarceration.

The entire introduction to the detention prison is brief and is carried on without explanation. Within a few hours after his arrest the prisoner finds himself locked up within a cell.

Prisoners within detention cells follow a rigid regimen. With some variations this regimen is standard throughout the Soviet Union, and has been adopted by nearly all Communist countries. The rigidity of the regimen may be relaxed or tightened by the direction of the interrogator.

An almost invariable feature of the management of any important suspect under detention is a period of total isolation in a detention cell. The prisoner is placed within his cell, the door is shut, and for an indefinite period he is totally isolated from human contact except by the specific direction of the officer in charge of his case. He is not allowed to talk to the guards or to communicate with other prisoners in any manner. When he is taken from his cell for any reason he is accompanied by a guard. If another prisoner approaches through the corridor he turns his face to the wall until the other prisoner has passed.

The hours and routine of the prisoner are rigidly organized. He is awakened early in the morning and given a short period in which to wash himself. His food is brought to him. He has a short and fixed time in which to eat it; the standard diet is

just adequate to maintain nutrition. He must clean himself and police his own cell; but he is not allowed enough time to keep it spotlessly clean. At some time in the morning he usually has an exercise period. Typically, his exercise consists of walking alone in the exercise yard. If he is in rigid isolation, he may not be allowed to exercise at all. He is usually allowed a slop jar in his cell which he can utilize for defecation and urination, but sometimes this is taken away. Then he must call the guard and perhaps wait for hours to be taken to the latrine.

At all times except when he is eating, sleeping, exercising, or being interrogated, the prisoner is left strictly alone in his cell. He has nothing to do, nothing to read, and no one to talk to. Under the strictest regimen he may have to sit or stand in his cell in a fixed position all day. He may sleep only at hours prescribed for sleep. Then he must go to bed promptly when told and must lie in a fixed position upon his back with his hands outside the blanket. If he deviates from this position, the guard outside will awaken him and make him resume it. The light in his cell burns constantly. He must sleep with his face constantly toward it.

If the prisoner becomes ill, he is taken to a prison physician by whom he is treated with the best medical care available according to the practices common to Soviet medicine. If

necessary, he may be placed under hospital care; but as soon as he has recovered the regimen will be resumed.

Prisoners are not allowed to commit suicide. Those who attempt to do so are thwarted and carefully nursed until they recover; then the regimen is resumed.

Deviations from the prescribed regimen are promptly noticed by the guards and are punished. Disturbed behavior is punished also. If this behavior persists and the officer in charge of the case is convinced that the prisoner has become mentally ill, the man may be placed under medical care until his health has returned; then the regimen is resumed.

This regimen within the detention cell is in itself a most potent weapon in the hands of the MVD. It has been developed and refined over a period of many years and used on literally thousands of prisoners. It is highly effective in "breaking the will" of prisoners -- so much so that many MVD officers are convinced that there is literally no man who cannot be brought to do their bidding.

The Effects of the Regimen in the Isolation Cell

The effects of this regimen upon prisoners are striking. It has been mentioned that the man who has been arrested by the MVD is usually intensely apprehensive. Often he has known for weeks that he would be arrested but has had no clear knowledge of when

or for what reason. He has been seized in the middle of the night and taken without explanation to prison. He knows that no friend can help him and that the MVD may do with him what they please.

A major aspect of his prison experience is isolation. Man is a social animal; he does not live alone. From birth to death, he lives in the company of his fellow man. His relations with other people and, especially with those closest to him, are almost as important to him as food or drink. When a man is totally isolated, he is removed from all of the interpersonal relations which are so important to him and taken out of the social role which sustains him. His internal as well as his external life is disrupted. Exposed for the first time to total isolation in an MVD prison, he develops a predictable group of symptoms, which might almost be called a "disease syndrome". The guards and MVD officers are quite familiar with this syndrome. They watch each new prisoner with technical interest as his symptoms develop.

The initial appearance of an arrested prisoner is one of bewilderment. For a few hours, he may sit quietly in his cell looking confused and dejected. But within a short time most prisoners become alert and begin to take an interest in their environment. They react with expectancy when anyone approaches

the door to the cell. They show interest and anxiety as they are exposed to each new feature of the prison routine. They may ask questions or begin conversations. Some make demands; they demand to know why they are being held, and protest that they are innocent. If they are foreign nationals, they may insist upon seeing their consular officers. Some take a "you can't do this to me" attitude. Some pass through a brief period of shouting, threatening, and demanding. All of this is always sternly repressed. If need be, the officer in charge of the case will see the prisoner, remind him of the routine, threaten him with punishment, and punish him if he does not subside. During this period the prisoner has not yet appreciated the full import of his situation. He tries to fraternize with the guards. He leaves part of his food if he does not like it. He tries to speak to prisoners whom he passes in the corridors and reaches back to close the door behind him when he is taken to the latrine. The guards refer to this as the period of getting "acclimatized" to the prison routine.

After a few days it becomes apparent to the prisoner that his activity avails him nothing and that he will be punished or reprimanded for even the smallest breaches of the routine. He wonders when he will be released or questioned. His requests have been listened to but never acted upon. He becomes

increasingly anxious and restless and his sleep is disturbed. He begins to look up alertly when anyone passes in the corridor. He jumps when the guard comes to the door. He becomes adjusted to the routine in his cell and goes through it punctiliously but he still leaves some of his food and occasionally reveals by small gestures his lack of complete submission to his environment.

The period of anxiety, hyperactivity and apparent adjustment to the isolation routine usually continues from one to three weeks. As it continues, the prisoner becomes increasingly dejected and dependent. He gradually gives up all spontaneous activity within his cell and loses all care about his personal appearance and actions. Finally, he sits and stares with a vacant expression, perhaps endlessly twisting a button on his coat. He allows himself to become dirty and disheveled. When food is presented to him, he no longer bothers with the niceties of eating but he eats it all. He may mix it into a mush and stuff it into his mouth like an animal. He goes through the motions of his prison routine automatically as if he were in a daze. The slop jar is no longer offensive to him. At this point, the prisoner seems to lose many restraints of ordinary behavior. He may soil himself, he weeps, mutters and prays aloud to himself. He follows the orders of the guard with the

docility of a trained animal. Indeed, the guards say that prisoners are "reduced to animals". It is estimated that in the average case it takes from four to six weeks of rigid, total isolation to produce this phenomenon.

The man who first experiences isolation in prison is, of course, experiencing far more than simple isolation. He usually feels profoundly anxious, helpless, frustrated, dejected, and entirely uncertain about his future. His first reaction to the isolation procedure is indeed one of bewilderment and some numbness at the calamity which has befallen him. This is followed by a period of interest and apprehension about every detail of the prison regimen, accompanied by hope that he can explain everything as soon as he gets a chance, or an expectation that he will be released when the proper authorities hear about his plight. Such hopes last but a few days, but they keep him alert and interested during that time.

As hope disappears, a reaction of anxious waiting supervenes. In this period, the profound boredom and complete loneliness of his situation gradually overwhelm the prisoner. There is nothing for him to do except ruminate. Because he has so much to worry about, his ruminations are seldom pleasant. Frequently, they take the form of going over and over all the possible causes for his arrest. His mood becomes one of

dejection. His sleep is disturbed by nightmares. He ultimately reaches a stage of depression in which he ceases to care about his personal appearance and behavior and pays little attention to his surroundings. In this stage the prisoner may have illusory experiences. A distant sound in the corridor sounds like someone calling his name. The rattle of a footstep may be interpreted as a key in the lock opening the cell. God may seem to speak to him in his prayers. He may see his wife standing beside him. His need for human companionship and his desire to talk to anyone about anything becomes a gnawing appetite like the hunger of a starving man.

Other Aspects of the Isolation Regimen

Not all of the reaction to this imprisonment experience can be attributed to isolation alone. Other potent forces are acting upon the newly imprisoned man. The prisoner's anxiety about himself is compounded by worry about what may happen to his friends and associates, and, in the case of those who possess information which they wish to hide, apprehension about how much the MVD knows or will find out. Even in the absence of isolation profound and uncontrolled anxiety is disorganizing. Uncertainty adds to his anxiety. The newly arrested prisoner does not know how long he will be confined, how he will be punished, or with what he will be charged. He does know that his punishment may

be anything up to death or permanent imprisonment. Many prisoners say that uncertainty is the most unbearable aspect of the whole experience. Sleep disturbances and nightmares lead to further fear and fatigue.

The effects of isolation, uncertainty and anxiety are usually sufficient to make them eager to talk to their interrogator, to seek some method of escape from a situation which has become intolerable. If these alone are not enough to produce the desired effects, the officer in charge has additional simple and highly effective ways of applying pressure. Two of the most effective of these are creating fatigue and preventing the prisoner adequate sleep. The constant light in the cell and the necessity of maintaining a rigid position in bed produce sleep disturbances; and the guards can awaken the prisoner at intervals. This is especially effective if the prisoner is awakened just as he drops off to sleep. Continued loss of sleep produces clouding of consciousness and a loss of alertness, both of which impair the victim's ability to sustain isolation.

Another simple and effective type of pressure is that of maintaining the temperature of the cell at a level which is either too hot or too cold for comfort. Continuous heat, at a level at which constant sweating is necessary in order to maintain

body temperature, is enervating and fatigue producing. Sustained cold is uncomfortable and poorly tolerated.

Still another pressure is to reduce the food ration to the point to which the prisoner experiences constant hunger. Deprivation of food produces lassitude, loss of general interest and some breakdown of courage. There is usually a loss of weight, often associated with weakness and asthenia. Some individuals become profoundly depressed when deprived of food. Both in prison camps and in human experiments, it has been observed that chronically hungry people can be induced to break down their culture-bound inhibitions and carry out antisocial acts in order to relieve their hunger.

The effects of isolation, anxiety, fatigue, lack of sleep, uncomfortable temperatures, and chronic hunger produce disturbances of mood, attitudes, and behavior in nearly all prisoners. The living organism cannot entirely withstand such assaults.

The Communists do not look upon these assaults as "torture". Undoubtedly, they use the methods which they do in order to conform, in a typical legalistic manner, to Communist theory which demands that "no force or torture be used in extracting information from prisoners." But these methods do constitute torture and physical coercion and should never be considered otherwise. All of them lead to serious disturbances

of many bodily processes and to demobilization of the personality.

The Interrogator

The MVD officer who has charge of a case during the period of suspicion, surveillance and arrest is now supplanted by another officer who is charged with the interrogation of the prisoner and the preparation of the deposition. Within the MVD, assignments to interrogation are not highly regarded. Such work is not looked upon as glamorous or exciting. Very often it involves assignment to outlying and relatively dull regions of the Soviet Union, and usually it is hard and thankless. The interrogation of prisoners is a tiring and an emotionally trying procedure. It can be assumed that a majority of those involved in the investigation and interrogation of unimportant prisoners are men of average ability with no great enthusiasm for their job. However, the MVD does also possess highly skilled, well-educated, extremely knowledgeable, experienced and able interrogators who are devoted to their profession and proud of their abilities. The interrogator assigned to an important prisoner can be expected to be a man of such high caliber.

Some of those who go into political police activity receive only a sort of "on-the-job" training under the guidance of more senior and experienced men; but a fair proportion of these police

officers are especially trained at an MVD school near Moscow. This school has been in existence for at least 15 years. It gives a course of two years duration. Trainees are allowed to observe a demonstration interrogation but do not actually conduct interrogations themselves. No formal training in psychology, psychiatry, pharmacology or physiology is included in the curriculum. There are no representatives of any of these sciences on the faculty and, as far as can be ascertained, there never have been. Trainees do receive information from experienced police officers on how to prepare a dossier, how to "size-up" a man, and how to estimate what sort of methods to use in "breaking" him; but the instructors draw entirely upon police experience. They have a contempt for theoretical psychiatry and psychology.

Interrogation

When the prisoner has been arrested and incarcerated in his cell the officer in charge of his case submits to his superiors a plan for the interrogation of the prisoner. This plan is drawn up on the basis of what is already known about the prisoner. It describes the methods to be used upon him, the attitudes to be taken toward him, the type of information which it is expected that he will reveal, and the type of crimes which he is believed to have committed and the assumed motivation for them.

The purpose of this plan appears to be primarily that of making the interrogator approach the prisoner with a definite conception of what he wants to do, and how he is going to proceed in doing it.

Soviet law specifies that, if a man is detained on suspicion, the first protocol of his interrogation must be given to the state prosecutor within ten days so that an arrest warrant may be issued, or the man may be released. In general, interrogators are constrained to comply with this regulation, and they try to produce enough evidence to obtain an arrest within ten days. Because they have little except suspicion to guide their questioning, they are necessarily vague in describing the prisoner's crimes to him. They must be cautious lest the prisoner get wind of what they want him to say and refuse to say it. It is probably this more than any calculated cunning which causes them to make to the prisoner such enigmatic statements as:"It is not up to me to tell you what your crimes are; it is up to you to tell me" -- statements which lead the perplexed prisoner to rack his brain for an answer. The prosecutor is not hard to satisfy, and the interrogator nearly always obtains enough evidence to make an "arrest". If not, he can apply for an extension of the detention period. The law provides no real protection for the prisoner. It has been estimated that more than 99% of those who are seized are ultimately convicted and punished.

Interrogations, once begun, are continued until the case is complete, but in some circumstances they are intentionally delayed. It appears that this delay is imposed when the prisoner is defiant, when he is thought to be withholding information, when the MVD is seeking a confession to crimes other than those for which it has evidence, and especially when it wants to use the prisoner for a public trial or to obtain a propaganda confession from him. In such cases, the interrogation begins when the officer in charge feels that the prisoner is ripe for it. This is usually when he observes that the prisoner has become docile and compliant and shows evidence of deterioration in his mood and personal appearance.

Interrogations are almost uniformly carried out at night. It is said that this practice of night interrogation originated not from any preconceived idea of its effectiveness, but because the early Chekists were so overburdened with police duties during the day that they could find time for interrogations only at night. For one reason or another, it has become standard procedure, possibly because the physical and psychological effect of night interrogations produces added pressure upon the prisoner. He is deprived of sleep and placed in a state of added uncertainty by never knowing when he will be awakened and questioned.

Typically, he will be awakened suddenly by the guard shortly after he has dropped off to sleep. Without explanation he is

taken from his cell and down several corridors to a small and barren interrogation room equipped with a desk and chair for the interrogator and a stool for the prisoner. The lighting is arranged so that the prisoner can be placed in a bright light while the interrogator sits in relative darkness. Sometimes a stenographer is present in one corner of the room to take notes. More often the interrogator makes his own notes, writing as the prisoner speaks. Usually only one interrogator is present but occasionally other officers are introduced. Sometimes interrogators alternate, for psychological reasons, one being "friendly" and the other "hostile". If his work is successful, the original interrogator may carry the case through to a conclusion, but if he does not achieve the desired goal, he may be replaced.

The atmosphere of the interrogation room generally has some degree of formality about it. The interrogator may be dressed in full uniform. If he wishes to impress the prisoner, he may take out a pistol, cock it, and lay it on the desk before him; but this psychological gambit does not seem to be a required part of the protocol.

The interrogator adjusts his attitude toward the prisoner according to his estimate of the kind of man he is facing. If the dossier indicates that the prisoner is a timid and fearful man, the interrogator may adopt a fierce and threatening demeanor. If

the prisoner is thought to be proud and sensitive, the interrogator may be insulting and degrading. If the prisoner has been a man of prestige and importance in private life, the interrogator may call him by his first name, treat him as an inferior and remind him that he has lost all rank and privilege. If it is known that the prisoner has been unfaithful to his wife or has committed some crime such as embezzlement, the interrogator may blackmail him by threatening exposure or punishment unless he cooperates. All these and many other tricks may be employed. They are not based upon a scientific theory of human behavior; they are tricks of the trade, so to speak, developed out of police experience and applied on a "rule of thumb", common sense basis.

Almost invariably the interrogator takes the attitude that the prisoner is guilty and acts as though all of his crimes are known. Almost invariably he points out to the prisoner that he is completely helpless, and that there is no hope for him unless he cooperates fully and confesses his crimes completely. Almost never does the interrogator state specifically what the prisoner's crimes actually are. This is left up to the prisoner who is told, in effect, that he knows the extent of his own crimes, and need only to make a complete statement of them. Almost invariably the interrogator does not accept the early statements of the prisoner. No matter what crimes he confesses, the interrogator forces the

prisoner to repeat his statements again and again, and to elaborate on them endlessly. Almost always he uses any discrepancies as indications of lying and questions the prisoner at length about them.

The first interrogation sessions are nearly always concerned with a complete review of the entire life experience of the prisoner. The interrogator wishes to know about the prisoner's background, his class origin, his parents, brothers and sisters, his friends and associates and everything that he has done throughout his life. If the case is of any importance, no detail is overlooked, and every period of the prisoner's life must be accounted for.

This review of the prisoner's life may occupy several interrogation sessions. It has several purposes. Its first purpose is to complete the prisoner's dossier. It gives the interrogator a thorough picture of the type of man he is dealing with and further guides him to the man's weaknesses which can be exploited. Furthermore, requiring a man to account for every detail of his life produces such a voluminous and involved story that the prisoner can scarcely avoid being trapped into inconsistencies if he is concealing anything. The information obtained from the life history can also be compared with that already in the police files, which is usually extensive. From the police

point of view, it is also important to know the associates of the prisoner because this may reveal his "accomplices", who then become suspects and can be interrogated. Most important, it reveals many "criminal" features of the prisoner such as reactionary class origin, membership in reactionary organizations and association with enemies of the state which are by Communist definition "crimes" no matter how long ago they were committed.

The prisoner, taken from his cell after a long period of isolation, anxiety and despair, usually looks upon the first interrogation as a welcome break. The mere opportunity to talk to someone is intensely gratifying. Many prisoners have reported that after long periods of isolation they eagerly anticipate interrogation sessions and try to prolong them simply for the companionship which they afford. Not infrequently, the prisoner also regards interrogation as an opportunity to justify himself and feels false assurance that he can explain everything if given a chance.

Usually he is much taken aback by the fact that his crimes are not specified, and that his guilt is assumed. He is further distressed when his protestations of innocence are greeted as lies. But the opportunity to talk about his life experiences is generally looked upon, especially by a person from Western society, as an opportunity to justify his behavior. Many men willingly divulge

all they can remember about themselves because they feel quite sure that they have done nothing which may be regarded as criminal. They are unaware that, from the point of view of Communist theory and of the MVD, much of their past behavior undoubtedly will be construed as "criminal". If the interrogator offers them the opportunity to have paper and pencil in their cells and to write out their biographies, they seize upon this avidly as a means of relieving the boredom of the tedious, lonely routine to which they are exposed.

Pressures Applied by the Interrogator

As the interrogation proceeds, the interrogator changes his behavior according to his previous plan and the development of the case. If the prisoner is cooperating and talking freely, the interrogator continues to show a relatively friendly attitude. But sooner or later he invariably expresses dissatisfaction with the information which the prisoner has given, no matter how complete it may be. He demands new details, and shows an especially great interest in the accomplices of the prisoner and the "organization" to which he is supposed to have been attached. When the prisoner protests that he has told all, and denies any other crimes or accomplices, the interrogator becomes hostile and begins to apply pressure.

Some of the pressures which can be applied simply by altering the routine within the cell have been described. The interrogator has many others at his command. Continuous and repetitive interrogation is an effective and very common form of pressure. Another which is widely used is that of requiring the prisoner to stand throughout the interrogation session or to maintain some other physical position which becomes painful. This, like other features of the MVD procedure, is a form of physical torture, in spite of the fact that the prisoners and MVD officers alike do not ordinarily perceive it as such. Any fixed position which is maintained over a long period of time ultimately produces excruciating pain. Certain positions, of which the standing position is one, also produce impairment of the circulation.

Many men can withstand the pain of long standing, but sooner or later all men succumb to the circulatory failure it produces. After 18 to 24 hours of continuous standing, there is an accumulation of fluid in the tissues of the legs. This dependent "edema" is produced by the extravasation of fluid from the blood vessels. The ankles and feet of the prisoner swell to twice their normal circumference. The edema may rise up the legs as high as the middle of the thighs. The skin becomes tense and intensely painful. Large blisters develop which break and exude watery serum. The accumulation of the body fluid in the legs

produces an impairment of the circulation. The heart rate increases and fainting may occur. Eventually there is a renal shutdown, and urine production ceases. Urea and other metabolites accumulate in the blood. The prisoner becomes thirsty, and may drink a good deal of water, which is not excreted, but adds to the edema of his legs. Men have been known to remain standing for periods as long as several days. Ultimately they usually develop a delirious state, characterized by disorientation, fear, delusions, and visual hallucinations. This psychosis is produced by a combination of circulatory impairment, lack of sleep, and uremia.

Periods of long standing are usually interrupted from time to time by interrogation periods during which the interrogator demands and threatens, while pointing out to the prisoner that it would be easy for him to end his misery merely by cooperating.

The MVD hardly ever uses manacles or chains, and rarely resorts to physical beatings. The actual physical beating is, of course, contrary to MVD regulations. The ostensible reason for these regulations is that they are contrary to Communist theory. The practical reason for them is the fact that the MVD looks upon direct physical brutality as an ineffective method of obtaining the compliance of the prisoner. Its opinion in this regard is shared by police in other parts of the world. In general, direct physical

brutality creates only resentment, hostility and further defiance.

It is a general policy that the interrogator must obtain the written permission of his superiors before using extreme coercive measures of any sort upon prisoners. In actual practice such permission is sought only if the officer in charge of a case feels that there is a need for a direct brutal assault. The MVD recognizes that some men who are intensely afraid of physical assault may break down if beaten once or twice, and it does use this procedure deliberately, though uncommonly. Generally speaking, when an interrogator strikes a prisoner in anger he does so "unofficially". The act is usually an expression of his exasperation and evidence that he, himself, is under emotional strain.

It can be taken for granted that some period of intense pressure and coercion will be applied to every prisoner, no matter how cooperative he tries to be at first. This period of pressure will be accompanied by expressions of displeasure and hostility from the interrogator, and sometimes from the guards also.

The "Friendly Approach"

The interrogator will continue this pressure until he feels that the prisoner is nearly at the end of his rope. At this point he introduces a psychological gambit which is probably the most

successful of any of the tricks at his command. He suddenly changes his demeanor. The prisoner, returned once again to an interrogation session that he expects will be a repetition of torture and vilification, suddenly finds that the entire scene has changed. The interrogation room is brightly lighted. The interrogator is seated behind his desk, relaxed and smiling. Tea and cigarettes are waiting on the table. He is ushered to a comfortable chair. The guard is sent away and sometimes the secretary also. The interrogator remarks about his appearance. He is sympathetic about the discomfort which he has been suffering. He is sorry that the prisoner has had such a difficult time. The interrogator himself would not have wished to do this to the prisoner -- it is only that the prison regulations require this treatment, because of the prisoner's own stubbornness. "But let us relax and be friends. Let us not talk any more about crimes. Tell me about your family" -- and so on. The usual line is to the effect that, "After all, I am a reasonable man. I want to get this business over as much as you do. This is as tiresome to me as it is to you. We already know about your crimes; it is a mere formality for you to write out your confession. Why don't we get it over with so that everything can be settled and you can be released?"

Prisoners find this sudden friendship and release of pressure almost irresistible. Nearly all of them avidly seize the opportunity to talk about themselves and their feelings, and then go on to talk about their families. Most of them proceed from this almost automatically to giving the information which the interrogator seeks. Even if they do not provide everything the interrogator wants at this time, he may continue his friendly demeanor and the relaxation of pressure for several more sessions before resuming the old regimen of torture. But if the prisoner does reveal significant information and cooperates fully, the rewards are prompt and gratifying. The interrogator smiles and congratulates him. Cigarettes are forthcoming. There is a large meal, often excellently prepared and served; and after this the prisoner returns to his cell and sleeps as long as he likes, in any position that he chooses.

The Course of the Interrogation

Such friendly and rewarding behavior will continue for several days -- usually as long as the interrogator feels that a significant amount of new information is being produced. At this point the prisoner may conclude that his ordeal is over; but invariably he is disappointed. For as soon as the interrogator decides that no new information is being yielded, the regimen of constant pressure and hostile interrogation is resumed. Again it

is carried to the point at which the prisoner is near breakdown. Again it is relaxed, and again the prisoner is rewarded if he cooperates. In this manner, proceeding with regular steps, alternating punishment with reward, the prisoner is constantly pressed to revise and rewrite the protocol until it contains all the statements which the interrogator desires, and is in a final form which meets with his approval. When it has at last been agreed upon and signed, the pressure is relaxed "for good", but the prisoner continues to live in his cell and continues under the threat of renewed pressure until such time as he has been taken before a court, has confessed, and has been sentenced.

Throughout the entire interrogation period, the prisoner is under some form of medical surveillance. Prison physicians are familiar with all the effects produced by MVD procedures, and evidently they are skilled at judging just how far the various procedures can be carried without killing or permanently damaging the prisoner. Prisoners who have been beaten have their wounds carefully dressed. Those who are forced to stand for long periods of time are examined periodically during the procedure. Sometimes the physician intervenes to call a halt if he feels the prisoner is in danger. The unintended death of a prisoner during the interrogation procedure is regarded as a serious error on the part of the prison officials.

The Interrogator's Point of View and Objectives

It has been said that the interrogator approaches the prisoner with the assumption that he is guilty. It is important that we define this statement precisely. It does not mean that the interrogator is not aware of the "true facts" of the situation but that he interprets them in the light of Communist ideology. The MVD officer is a Communist. He has selected this prisoner from one of the groups of suspects described earlier. The man was arrested because the MVD, which represents the Communist State, regarded him as a menace to the Party or its program. Anyone who is a menace to the Party is, by definition, guilty of threatening the security of the Communist State. Ergo, from the Communist point of view, the man is "guilty". In other words, the MVD has decided that this man must be dealt with in some manner, "for the good of the State." Once the man has been arrested this point is no longer open to question. This is the true though esoteric meaning of the frequently repeated Communist statement that, "In a Communist state, innocent people are never arrested." If one accepts their definition of "guilt" and "innocence", this is indeed a fact.

However, the interrogator does not know just what specific "crimes" the man may have committed. In fact, it is quite clear that most of the people arrested by the MVD have not really

committed any specific serious crimes at all. But the police do know that the prisoner has committed some acts which are contrary to the broad Soviet laws against political crimes, as well as minor "actual" crimes. Furthermore, experience has taught them that if they put enough pressure upon the prisoner, sooner or later they will get him to confess to acts which can be interpreted as a "major crime". Once this confession has been obtained, the MVD can demand from the court a punishment equivalent to that which it intended that the prisoner should receive when it arrested him.

Much of the activity of the interrogator can be looked upon as a process of persuasion. The primary work of an interrogator is to convince the prisoners that what they did was a crime. Having gotten evidence from his informers and from the prisoner, it is up to the interrogator to persuade the prisoner that certain actions which he has carried out constitute a crime. The prisoner is usually prepared to admit that the acts have been carried out. Often as not, he revealed them freely because he did not consider them to be criminal. It is up to the interrogator to make the prisoner see that these acts do constitute a serious crime, and acknowledge this by signing a deposition and making a confession in court if necessary. The Communist legal system requires that this be done before a case can be settled.

The fact that the interrogator is a dedicated Communist makes his task of persuasion somewhat easier. The interrogator approaches the prisoner with the knowledge that the man is actually a criminal by Communist definition; and he has a large body of convenient Communist definitions and rationalizations to help him in convincing his victim of this. For example, according to Communist theory, acts are judged by their "objective effects" rather than by the motives of those who committed them. Thus, if a prisoner, through an honest mistake, has damaged a piece of machinery belonging to the State, he is a "wrecker". Objectively, he has wrecked an important piece of property belonging to the State. The fact that he did this with innocent motives is not a consideration. Thus a "mistake", and "accident" and a "crime" all become the same thing.

Likewise, according to Communist theory, a man's acts and thoughts are judged "consequentially". Thus, if a prisoner is known to have said that the MVD was too powerful, the fact that he has said this may make him a "traitor" and "saboteur". The Communist reasoning is that a man who says that the MVD is too powerful, believes that it is too powerful and will ultimately act upon this belief. This ultimate act will constitute sabotage and treason; therefore, the man is a saboteur and a traitor. Similarly, a man who has friendly association with foreign

nationals must have some friendly feeling toward them; foreign governments are capitalist and imperialist; a man who is friendly to foreign nationals is giving help to the agents of capitalist imperialism; therefore, the man is a spy whether he realizes it or not.

Such peculiar twists of Communist logic are difficult for Western prisoners to accept at first. Usually they object strenuously to these definitions of "treason", "wrecking", and "sabotage"; but ultimately, under constant pressure and persuasion, a prisoner usually agrees to some statement to the effect that, "By Communist laws I am a spy." Thereafter, there follows further argument and persuasion to the effect that a person is judged by the laws of the country in which the crimes are committed. Ultimately the qualifying phrase is omitted, and the final deposition contains the simple statement, "I am a spy."

Many MVD officers impress the prisoner by the sincerity of their dedication to Communism and its ostensible ideals. The interrogator often displays a patient sympathy which becomes apparent to the prisoner. His attitude that, "This is something we must go through with and neither you nor I can stop until you have cooperated and signed a proper confession", is to some extent a genuine attitude. The MVD system allows of no other solution from the interrogator's point of view. It is in fact

true that the interrogations will have to go on until a proper deposition has been signed. The prisoner often comes to recognize this sincerity. Many see that indeed the interrogator must follow the system, and there is nothing which he can do about it. Thus, the prisoner, in his need for companionship, may displace his hostility from the interrogator to the "system". Many interrogators genuinely plead with the prisoner to learn to see the truth, to think correctly, and to cooperate.

The Reaction of the Prisoner to the Interrogation

The way in which a prisoner reacts to the whole process of interrogation is to a great extent dependent upon the manner of man he is, his pre-existing attitudes and beliefs, and the circumstances surrounding his arrest and imprisonment. All prisoners have this in common: They have been isolated and have been under unremitting pressure in an atmosphere of hostility and uncertainty. They all find themselves in a dilemma at the time that the interrogation begins. The regimen of pressure and isolation has created an overall discomfort which is well nigh intolerable. The prisoner invariably feels that something must be done to find a way out. Death is denied him. Ultimately, he finds himself faced with the choice of continuing interminably under the intolerable pressures of his captors or accepting the way out which the interrogator offers. The way out is a

rationalization. It allows the prisoner to meet the demands of his interrogator by degrees, while at the same time retaining within himself some shred of belief that by his own standards he has not capitulated. The rationalization may be -- and very often is -- so patently absurd and untrue that the victim, in his "right mind", would be utterly incapable of accepting it. But he is not in his right mind. His capacity to distinguish true from false, or good from bad, has been deliberately undermined. With rare exceptions prisoners accept this way out, provided the pressures are prolonged and intense and the interrogator can effectively adjust his persuasiveness.

Various categories of prisoners respond to different types of persuasion. Persons who have been lifelong members of the Communist party are familiar with the Communist concept of "crime" and the functions of the MVD. Furthermore, they have all been trained in the ritual of self-criticism, confession, punishment and rehabilitation which has been part of Communist procedure since before the revolution. Many Communists can rationalize a belief that they are actually criminals as specified by the MVD and come to see their punishment as necessary for the good of the State and the Party. To the true Party member, such martyrdom carries with it an air of triumph.

Non-Communist prisoners of idealistic beliefs or socialist sympathies apparently make ready targets for the logic of the interrogator. Such persons are usually compelled to agree that the ostensible and idealistic motives of the Communist Party are "good", and that those who oppose these ideals are "bad". The rationalization in this case takes the form of getting the prisoner to say that the Communist Party has the same value system that he does; something which the prisoner agrees is "bad" by his own definition. From this point the prisoner proceeds through the usual steps to the ultimate signing of the deposition.

Persons who carry with them strong feelings of guilt associated with highly organized systems of moral values likewise become ready targets for the persuasion of the interrogator. Very few people are entirely free of guilt feelings, but, inappropriate as it seems, such feelings often are found in the highest degree in those whose objectives and behavior are beyond reproach. For example, many strongly religious people have a profound sense of sin. They feel guilty of shortcomings of their own which are much smaller than those found in most of their fellow men. They constantly see themselves as transgressing their own moral code and in the need of forgiveness for doing so. Skilled interrogators make use of this.

Individuals with so-called sociopathic or psychopathic personalities who have few moral scruples are vulnerable because they can be bribed, in a sense, to take the easy way out. Obviously, individuals actually "caught with the goods" receive short shrift at the hands of the MVD interrogator.

The maze in which any prisoner finds himself has so many ramifications that it is almost impossible for him to escape from it without signing a protocol and being convicted. Anything he has done may be a crime. He has been adjudged guilty before his arrest. He is put in a situation of intolerable pressure. It is made clear to him that his only way out of this situation is to cooperate with the interrogator. He is offered a reasonable rationalization for doing so. Sooner or later, under these circumstances, the prisoner and the interrogator almost inevitably come to an agreement upon a deposition which satisfies both of them.

The Trial

When the prisoner has finally reached the point of admitting his crimes and he and the interrogator have agreed upon a protocol satisfactory to both of them, he experiences a profound sense of relief. Even though his crimes may be serious and the punishment for them severe, he welcomes a surcease from the unrelenting pressures and miseries of the interrogation procedure. Whatever

the future may hold for him, he has for the moment found a way out of an intolerable situation.

When a satisfactory deposition has been prepared and signed, the pressures upon the prisoner are customarily relaxed. He is allowed to sleep as long as he wishes; he may have reading and writing material in his room. Sometimes he can join with other prisoners in periods of exercise. His meals improve and his guards become friendly or even solicitous. This easy treatment is continued until he is thoroughly rested and his health has been restored. Then, in most cases, he is taken before the court. The state prosecutor presents the court with the signed protocol and questions the prisoner about his crimes. Sometimes a defense attorney is assigned; this man invariably limits himself to requesting leniency from the court. The whole procedure is usually brief and formal. There are no verdicts of "not guilty". The function of the judge is solely that of presiding over the trial and passing upon the prisoner a sentence which has usually been agreed upon beforehand by the prosecutor and the MVD officer in charge of the case.

It is this aspect of the proceedings which is most bewildering to Western observers. It is easy to understand how prisoners can be tortured into signing confessions of crimes which they did not commit, but it is difficult to understand why the prisoners do not renounce these confessions later at the public trials.

Beginning with the Purge Trials of the 1930's, the NKVD and its successors and offspring in Russia, the Eastern European satellites, and China have presented the world with a series of public trials at which the prisoners calmly and seemingly without coercion make outrageous confessions of unbelievable crimes, praise their captors, and ask for the most severe punishment for themselves. These prisoners have included important Communist officials, former NKVD officers, non-Communist citizens of various categories, and foreigners of the most diverse backgrounds. All of these prisoners apparently were innocent; some faced certain death; and many were profoundly anti-Communist. Men of the highest caliber and integrity like Cardinal Mindszenty seemed to have the strongest possible motivations to resist; but none of them stood up in court and denounced the confession and his captors. This phenomenon demands an explanation.

The explanation is available but it is not simple. It is necessary to examine the proposition in detail in order to view it in its proper light.

First, it is by no means true that "all prisoners confess freely at a public trial." Only a very small minority of prisoners of the Communist state police ever appear at a public trial. The proportion of those tried publicly is exceedingly small. The MVD will not expose a prisoner to a public trial

unless it is convinced that he will go through with his confession as planned. If there is any doubt about this, no public trial is held. But even with this precaution the MVD is not infallible. At the Purge Trials several of the prisoner tried to recant parts of their confessions. When a prisoner tried to recant, the prosecutor halted the examination of that person. Usually, when he returned from his cell several days later he was again docile and cooperative. Some of the so-called "public trials" have not actually been public. They have been carried out in the presence of a select audience while movies and recordings are made of the prisoner's words which are later transmitted to the public.

The majority of prisoners do come to trial, but these trials are not public. They are held in camera. The state police are concerned only with political crimes and espionage. Their prisoners are tried before "Military Tribunals", which are not public courts. Those present are only the interrogator, the state prosecutor, the prisoner, the judges, a few stenographers, and perhaps a few officers of the court. At such a trial there is no opportunity for public protest, and any protest which is made can be readily expunged from the record. So far as the prisoner is concerned, this so-called trial appears as nothing more than the next step in his process of imprisonment. He has remained entirely in the hands of his interrogators and guards

with access to no one else. When he finally comes before the court he sees no one new except the state prosecutor, the judge, and the court officials. The defense attorney, if one is assigned, shows not the slightest interest in refuting any of the evidence in the confession or in establishing a plea of "not guilty". He never questions the fact that the prisoner is guilty as charged. Sometimes he asks the judge for lenience; but not infrequently he informs the court that he is convinced the prisoner is just as big a monster as the prosecution says he is and that he cannot bring himself to ask the court for leniency. The judge likewise shows no interest in the question of guilt or innocence. He limits himself to maintaining order in the court and passing sentence. If the prisoner has any illusions that the prosecutor, the judge, and the defense attorney are going to allow him any opportunity to dispute the facts in the case these are soon dispelled.

By no means do all prisoners receive a trial of any sort. Those who are stubborn or repeatedly recant their confessions during the interrogation procedure will not be trusted even at private trials. Uncooperative and stubborn prisoners and those who might make embarrassing statements are "dealt with administratively." For many years the state police have had the right to carry out administrative trials for any prisoners whom they do not wish to expose to the usual trial procedure. These

administrative trials consist of simply presenting the prisoner to a group of three senior police officers (the "Troika") who pass sentence immediately and have it carried out forthwith. These administrative trials take place within the detention prison. Sometimes the prisoner is not even present at them; sentence is passed by the Troika merely upon the basis of the signed protocol.

Sometimes the alleged records of these trials have been made public, but generally the fact that such a trial had taken place is never revealed. For every Soviet citizen who has appeared at a public trial there have been thousands who have been tried only at private trials by military tribunals or have been dealt with administratively by the police themselves. Thus, a great number of high Communist officials, captured German officers, and similar prisoners who fell into the hands of the Russian secret police were not tried at all. So far as the public was concerned, they merely disappeared.

It is said that since the death of Beria and the dissolution of the MGB, the right of administrative trial has been withdrawn from the MVD. The history of past attempts to reform the secret police suggest that it will be quietly restored within a few years, if it has not been already.

Public Confessions

If we exclude from consideration all those prisoners who are dealt with administratively, two questions remain: Why do all of

those prisoners who are tried in private confess almost without exception? Why do some prisoners confess at public trials where there is actually some opportunity to make an open denial of guilt?

In response to the question of why prisoners at private trials confess almost without exception the following answers can be given:

(1) The setting of the private trial as we have just described it makes it apparent to the prisoner that any attempt at recantation is useless.

(2) The prisoner at a private trial is always under actual threat by the MVD. The officer in charge of his case has clearly indicated to him that any attempt to alter or recant any part of his confession will lead to an immediate resumption of the interrogation-torture regimen. This threat is as poignant as a cocked pistol.

(3) Warm and positive feelings between prisoners and their interrogating officers often develop during the interrogation process, and many prisoners come to trial with the feeling that, if they attempt to alter their testimony, they will be dishonoring an agreement with their interrogators.

(4) Finally, it is to be emphasized that in spite of all of these deterrents, some prisoners do recant at their private trials. The court then decides that these prisoners have not

yet reached a full awareness of their crimes. They are sent back to the detention prison, and once again put through the torture-interrogation regimen. Sooner or later, they learn that pleas of "not guilty" are not acceptable in Soviet courts, and that they must behave themselves at their trials. Otherwise, they are indefinitely detained or executed.

In answering the question of why some prisoners confess publicly when there is some opportunity for them to renounce their confessions and thereby embarrass their captors, one must consider the various categories of those who have been tried in public. Widely publicized trials are staged by the Communists only under exceptional circumstances and always for propaganda purposes. They are carefully managed "set pieces" in which every performer must play his role exactly as prescribed. The MVD and other Communist police organizations select the prisoners for these shows with great care.

The first category of those who have made public confessions are prominent Bolsheviks who have fallen from grace; Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Bukharin, Radek and their associates at the time of the great purges; more recently, Luse, Rajk in Hungary, Traicko Kostov in Bulgaria, Slansky, Clementis, and others in Czechoslovakia, China, etc. The list is extensive, but not nearly so extensive as the list of prominent Communist officials who were liquidated

administratively, probably because they could not be trusted at a public trial.

But why did these confess, who did so? The old Bolsheviks "confessed" primarily because they were lifelong, dedicated Communists. They had committed their lives to the belief that nothing is sacred but the Party, and the Party is always right. If there is a central point in the Communist creed, it is this. These men all subscribed to the belief that opposition to the Party line, as expressed by the Party leaders, is a crime. Whatever else they were, they were "chronic oppositionists", and knew themselves to be so. They all subscribed to the Communist ritual of public self-criticism and punishment. Nearly all of them had at one time or another publicly criticized themselves and had been punished. Several had been expelled from the Party, not once but several times. They all knew themselves to be in opposition to the Party leadership, and they all felt guilty about this. In spite of this, they still considered themselves to be Bolsheviks and were prepared in principle to accept any demand which the Party might make upon them, even to the point of death.

Another category of those who have confessed publicly is that group of intellectually or idealistically motivated people who were thought to be opposed to Communism, or at least to be non-Communist, prior to their arrest. Most prominent in this group is

Cardinal Mindszenty; also included in this are other Roman Catholic priests from the satellite countries such as Bishop Cruszi.

Still another category of those who have confessed publicly are various foreign businessmen, newspapermen and military men who were arrested or captured in the course of their routine duties; Robert Vogeler in Hungary and William Oatis in Czechoslovakia are examples. In all of these cases, the following factors are evident:

(1) The confessions made by the prisoners were "actually true" in the sense that the specific acts described in the confessions actually occurred.

(2) The interpretation put upon these acts was the Communist interpretation.

(3) The prisoner had been brought to agree that in the country in which he was arrested the Communist laws applied and, therefore, these acts constituted a crime. The prisoner, therefore, pleaded guilty to "crimes" which were "crimes" by Communist definition, but which he had not intended as crimes or considered to be crimes at the time that he carried them out. This qualification, however, was missing from the statements made by the prisoners at the trials.

(4) All of these prisoners were under the threat of renewed torture-interrogation regimen if they recanted or changed their confessions.

(5) Many of them had the actual or implied promise as well as the firm belief that they would be released if they cooperated with the police.

(6) Furthermore, all of them were able to rationalize that their confessions would not be believed by outsiders in any case. This rationalization was in part a correct one -- their confessions were widely disbelieved in the United States; but in some other areas of the world their confessions are accepted as factual.

(7) Finally, it must be emphasized that in all these cases, though probably to varying degrees, the brainwashing process -- the disintegration of personality accompanied by some shift in value-system -- had taken place. In the case of devoted Communists, it is possible that fanatic loyalty to the Party played a large part in bringing about the confessions, without the necessity of extensive brainwashing. On the other hand, major shifts in their thinking processes must have influenced the public confessions of Cardinal Mindszenty, Vogeler and Oatis. When absurd events and incredible logic are apparent in convincingly sincere statements by men of such intelligence, no other explanation is sufficient. These men were reduced to a state in which their conceptual processes were no longer encumbered by processes of critical judgment.

Punishment

The period of interrogation and detention, no matter how long and terrible it may be, is not considered imprisonment. The punishment begins only after the sentence has been passed. Sometimes a lenient judge will allow the prisoner to count his period of detention as a part of a prison sentence, but often this period is discounted altogether. According to Communist theory, the purpose of prison systems is to rehabilitate criminals through wholesome work, productive activity, and education. For this purpose prisoners are transported to Siberia or the Arctic where most of them spend their terms working in mines and construction projects under brutal and primitive conditions. Those who are fortunate enough to receive any education during this procedure are educated by further indoctrination with Communist ideas.

Comparison of Russian and Chinese Communist Practices

From the standpoint of understanding the techniques of brainwashing, the practices of the Chinese add little to the Russian procedures just described. There are, however, some general differences, a few of which may be mentioned.

(1) In China, at the moment at least, the period of detention is greatly prolonged. Whereas in the Soviet Union trial and sentencing take place fairly soon after the completion of the interrogation and the preparation of a suitable

protocol, in China the preparation of a first confession is only a prelude to a long period of indoctrination and re-education, which may go on for years. It is not terminated until those in charge of the prisoner believe that he has finally adopted a "correct" attitude and behavior. It is only then that the trial, the sentencing and the formal term of imprisonment or other punishment begins.

(2) Unlike the MVD, the Chinese make extensive use of group interaction among prisoners, in obtaining information, in applying pressures, and in carrying out indoctrination.

(3) The goal of the MVD detention and interrogation procedure is the preparation of a protocol upon which a suitable punishment can be based, so that the MVD can then deal with the prisoner according to its preconceived idea of what must be done for the good of the Party and the Soviet State. In a minority of cases, this includes a public trial for propaganda purposes. The MVD does not appear to be greatly concerned about the future attitudes and behavior of the prisoner, so long as he behaves properly during the period of trial and sentencing. The goal of the Chinese detention and interrogation procedure, on the other hand, is primarily that of insuring that the prisoner will develop a relatively long lasting change in his attitudes

and overt behavior that will be sustained after his release, so that he will not again constitute a danger to the Communist state. The securing of information by interrogation, the preparation of proper protocols and "confessions", and the participation of the prisoners in public propaganda trials, are secondary to this primary goal.

(4) Whereas in the Soviet Union and the satellites the ritual of public self-criticism, confession, self-degradation, punishment, and rehabilitation is a party procedure confined to Communists, the Chinese have extended this practice to the non-party population, and to the prison population in particular, and have made it an important feature of their indoctrination procedure.

(5) Physical torture of the traditional sort is more common. Manacles and leg chains are frequently used.

(6) Procedures are less standardized.

(7) Detention facilities are more primitive.

The essential differences appear to be in those of emphasis and objective, as indicated in (1) through (4) above. The Soviet objective is one of securing a confession in a relatively short time. The Chinese objective is that of indoctrination, of converting the victim to Communism; and the process may be prolonged for years. Brainwashing is but one of many techniques used.

Frequent lectures and constant and intensive social pressures are also prominent elements.

Some persons who have emerged from Chinese prisons have been characterized by amazingly altered political beliefs and immediate loyalty to Communism. They have, indeed, been described as the most thoroughly brainwashed of all! While the story of Chinese indoctrination is an interesting and impressive one, we believe that it is in the interest of clear thinking to confine our use of the term "brainwashing" to that systematic breakdown of the personality which is deliberately brought about for the purpose of securing false confessions.

Conclusions

From this general description it is possible to draw two general conclusions about Communist control techniques. First, there is little that is new in their repertoire of controls. A few pages of Malleus Maleficarum*, for example, will convince any reader of the amazing similarity between present-day Communist brainwashing methods and those used for obtaining confessions of witchcraft three and four centuries ago. Communist control of the individual and the masses is little different from controls exercised by virtually all absolute forms

* SUMMERS, M. Malleus Maleficarum. London Pushkin Press, 1948. 278 pp.

of government, past and present. What is new with the Communists is the extent of application and the unsurpassed organization in administration of control techniques.

The second general conclusion is that the Communists have developed a highly systematic use of techniques for controlling the individual. This systemization apparently has been developed pragmatically by trial and error, rather than from the best available theoretical principles. There is evidence that no scientists have participated in the actual brainwashing process. And considering what is known of the brainwashing process, more systematic application of established psychological principles could probably increase the efficacy of brainwashing.

Both the Soviets and Chinese are flexible in developing "tailor-made" control pressures for specific individuals. This tailoring of treatment is dependent upon some ability to diagnose what combination of pressures will be most effective in manipulating a particular personality.

Finally, it may be worth re-emphasizing at this point that many kinds of people who have been in the hands of the Communists have done many different things for many different reasons -- to all of which the term "brainwashing" has at some time been applied. Loyal Communists have confessed falsely "for the good of the Party", no doubt in some cases with little immediate

coercion. Some uneducated or rootless persons have been easy marks for conversion to Communism. It seems wise, however, to reserve the term "brainwashing" for that assault on the personality which is a clear and prominent result of the Soviet regimen just described. It is that assault on the personality to which we shall now turn our attention.

AN ANALYSIS OF CONTROL DURING BRAINWASHING

Having gotten the "feel" of the Communist prison and interrogation procedures which culminate in the false confession, we should now organize our thinking with respect to just what is accomplished and how this objective is brought about.

The objective is to procure a plausible, detailed, reasonably consistent confession of crimes. A major characteristic of this confession is that nearly all of it is false. Some of the specific acts or utterances ascribed to the victim may, to be sure, be true. But the criminal meaning of the acts, the criminal intent of the victim in performing them, many embellishments and elaborations of the acts, the victim's guilt with regard to them, and his belief that he should be punished-- all these are distortions, and quite at variance with the facts.

A second and most essential characteristic of the brainwashed, confessing individual is that he appears to have developed a conviction that what he confesses is true. This is indeed the most startling element in the whole picture; and this is the element which demands explanation.

An illustration may make this clear. If a prisoner has been chosen for brainwashing, he cannot escape going through the entire process simply by indicating a willingness to sign anything he is asked to sign. In public trial, such confessions would be unconvincingly supported by the victim, or might be denied. The whole process must be carried through to the point where the victim literally evinces belief in his confession.

The key figure in the brainwashing process is the interrogator. He is the protagonist around whom the prisoner develops his conflict, and upon whom the prisoner comes to depend as he seeks a solution for that conflict. He provides the general outline, though not the details, of the great fabrication which the victim must construct, defend, and come to believe before the process is culminated. He initiates the pressures which are applied to the victim, and readily adapts his own behavior to provide additional pressure. His role is predominant.

The process of brainwashing is essentially one in which two paths are being followed. One is the demoralizing process, the result of which is to reduce the victim's critical faculties to the point where he no longer discriminates clearly between true and false, logical and illogical. The

other is the re-organizing process, in which he is required to construct his confession, elaborate it, defend it, and believe it. These two processes are actually going on all the time, though an initial softening-up usually precedes the intensive interrogation and the initial construct of the confession.

The previous section described in some detail the control pressures exerted by the Communists. Recognition of the psychological effects of these pressures within the individual is necessary to an understanding of brainwashing. It should be noted that this is a theoretical analysis. As indicated in the last section, the Communists did not design their pressures to satisfy a particular need to achieve these effects.

A Hypothetical Schedule of Brainwashing

In the period immediately following capture or arrest, his captors are faced with the problem of how to exploit the prisoner maximally. When, as in the case of arrested Soviet citizens, the arrest and interrogation plan already developed is suitable, little further need be done to carry out the assault upon the prisoner. When the prisoner is not a citizen of the Communist country, or he is a prisoner of war, a plan must be developed from scratch. Therefore,

initial treatment is similar both for those who are to be interrogated for intelligence and those who are to undergo a systematic brainwashing. One practical consequence immediately becomes apparent. The minds of those who are to be interrogated for intelligence must be kept sufficiently clear and intact to permit a coherent, undistorted revelation of the desired information; whereas in brainwashing the initial assault is upon the clarity of the thought processes.

Concurrently with preliminary administrative contacts the prisoner undergoes a physical and psychological softening-up process. This softening-up includes limited, unpalatable food, regimented exercise and use of toilet facilities, withholding of reading materials, deprivation of tobacco, and strict regulation of the conditions and position of sleep.

As previously indicated, the most important mechanism of the brainwashing process is the interrogation. During the course of the interrogation the interrogator may attempt to elicit information (especially in the case of captured military personnel), to indoctrinate his victim to the Communist point of view, to attack his value-system and his thought processes, and to lead him through the demoralization

and reintegration that characterizes the brainwashed state. In achieving his objective the interrogator controls the administration of all the other pressures.

The following emotional states are created within the individual during the systematic course of the brainwashing:

(1) A feeling of helplessness in attempting to deal with the impersonal machinery of control.

(2) An initial reaction of "surprise".

(3) A feeling of uncertainty about what is required of him.

(4) A developing feeling of dependence upon the interrogator.

(5) A sense of doubt and a loss of objectivity.

(6) Feelings of guilt.

(7) A questioning attitude toward his own value-system.

(8) A feeling of potential "breakdown", i.e., that he might go insane.

(9) A need to defend his acquired principles.

(10) A final sense of "belonging" (identification).

The order in which the feelings are engendered within the individual may vary somewhat; but all are necessary to the brainwashing process.

A feeling of helplessness in attempting to deal with the impersonal machinery of control develops within the individual during the early stages. The individual who receives the softening-up treatment described above not only begins to feel like an animal but feels also that nothing can be done about it. No one pays any personal attention to him. His complaints fall on deaf ears. His loss of communication, if he has been isolated, creates a feeling that he has been forgotten. Everything that happens to him occurs according to an impersonal time schedule that has nothing to do with his needs. The voices and footsteps of the guards are muted. He notes many contrasts. The cells are clean but he is filthy. His greasy, unpalatable food is served on battered tin dishes by guards immaculately dressed in white. The first steps in "depersonalization" of the prisoner have begun. He has no idea what to expect. Ample opportunity is allotted for him to ruminate upon all the unpleasant or painful things that could happen to him. He approaches the main interrogation with mixed feelings of relief and fright.

The controlled individual is constantly experiencing surprise. That is, what he expects is often not what actually

happens to him. Rarely is the prisoner prepared for the fact that interrogators are often initially friendly and considerate. They make every effort to demonstrate that they are reasonable human beings. Often they apologize for any bad treatment received by the prisoner and promise to improve the prisoner's lot if he, too, is reasonable. This behavior is not what the prisoner has steeled himself for. He lets down some of his defenses and tries to take a reasonable attitude. The first occasion, however, that the prisoner balks at satisfying a request of the interrogator, he is in for another surprise. The formerly reasonable interrogator unexpectedly turns into a furious maniac who screams epithets. The interrogator may slap the prisoner or draw his pistol and threaten to shoot him. Usually this storm of emotion ceases as suddenly as it began and the interrogator stalks from the room. These surprising changes create a doubt in the prisoner as to his very ability to perceive another person's motivations correctly. His next interrogation, as likely as not, will be marked by the very impassivity of the interrogator's mien.

A feeling of uncertainty about what is required of him likewise results from the prisoner's early contacts with the

interrogator. Pleas of the prisoner to learn specifically of what he is accused and by whom are sidestepped by the interrogator. Initially the interrogation is left unstructured. The prisoner is asked to tell why he thinks he is held and what he feels he is guilty of. If the prisoner fails to come up with anything, he is accused in terms of broad generalities (e.g., espionage, sabotage, acts of treason against the "people", etc.). This usually provokes the prisoner to make some statement about his activities. If this takes the form of a denial, he is usually sent to isolation on further decreased food rations to "think over" his crimes.

Isolation appears to be an unusually efficacious control pressure. Individual differences in psychological reaction to isolation are very great. Some individuals appear to be able to withstand prolonged periods of isolation without deleterious effect; while a relatively short period of isolation reduces others to the verge of psychosis. Psychological reaction varies considerably with the conditions of the isolation cell. Some individuals have indicated a strong reaction to the filth and vermin, although they had negligible reactions to the isolation itself. Others, however, reacted violently to isolation in relatively clean cells.

The predominant cause of the latter reaction appears to be the lack of sensory stimulation. The even greyness of the walls (or total lack of light), the lack of sound, the absence of social contact, all combine to deprive the individual of differential stimulation of his sensory end organs. Research has indicated that, when sensory stimulation has been systematically decreased the individual is incapable of tolerating his own subjective reactions for more than a very limited number of days. Experimental subjects reported vivid hallucinations and overwhelming fears.

This process of alternating periods of isolation with demands for a confession during interrogation can be repeated again and again. The prisoner is forced to make some compromise to break the intolerable cycle. As soon as he can think of something that might be considered self-incriminating, the interrogator appears momentarily satisfied. The prisoner is asked to write down his statement in his own words and sign it.

Meanwhile the controlled individual is developing a strong sense of dependence upon the interrogator. It does not take him long to realize that the interrogator is the source of all punishment, all gratification and all communi-

cation that the prisoner can have. The interrogator meanwhile demonstrates his unpredictability. He is perceived by the prisoner as a creature of whim. At times the interrogator can be pleased very easily and at other times no effort on the part of the prisoner will placate him. The prisoner may begin to channel so much energy into trying to predict the behavior of the unpredictable interrogator that he loses track of what is happening inside himself. His recognition of dependence upon a relatively unpredictable interrogator is a source of intense internal conflict.

After the prisoner has developed the above psychological and emotional reactions to a sufficient degree, the brainwashing begins in earnest. First the prisoner's remaining critical faculties must be destroyed. He undergoes long, fatiguing interrogations while looking at a bright light. He is called back again and again for interrogations after minimal sleep. Drugs may be used to accentuate his mood swings. He develops depression when the interrogator is being kind and becomes euphoric when the interrogator is threatening the direct penalties. And then the cycle is reversed. The prisoner finds himself in a constant state of anxiety which prevents him from relaxing even when he is

permitted to sleep. Short periods of isolation now bring on visual and auditory hallucinations. The prisoner feels himself losing his objectivity.

The prisoner may be tortured by being forced to stand in one spot for several hours or assume some other pain-inducing position. The physiological effects of such torture have been described. Psychologically, this type of torture creates additional internal conflict. When the prisoner is required to stand in one position, there is often engendered within him an initial determination to "stick it out". This internal act of resistance provides a feeling of moral superiority, at first. As time passes and the pain mounts, the individual becomes aware that, to some degree, it is his own original determination to resist that is causing the continuance of pain. There develops a conflict within the individual between his moral determination and his desire to collapse and discontinue the pain. It is this extra internal conflict, in addition to the conflict over whether or not to give in to the demands made of him, that tends to make this method of torture so effective in the breakdown of the individual personality.

It is in this state that the prisoner must keep up an

endless argument with his interrogator. He may be faced with the confessions of other individuals who "collaborated" with him in his crimes. The prisoner seriously begins to doubt his own memory. This feeling is heightened by his inability to recall little things like the names of the people he knows very well or the date of his birth. The interrogator patiently sharpens this feeling of doubt and uncertainty by a clever line of questioning. For example, if the goal of the brainwashing is an admission of participation in germ-warfare activities, the following questions may be asked incessantly: "Did you personally supervise the loading of bombs in your plane? Did you know exactly what was in each of them? Did you count the explosions of the bombs you dropped? Are you sure? Were you told to hit secondary targets if you couldn't achieve your primary targets? Were you ordered to drop all of your bombs well-within enemy territory? Were some of your explosives of the anti-personnel type? Are you sure that none of your bombs contained bacteria? If you personally had any objection to the use of such germ-warfare weapons, do you think your superiors would have told you what you were carrying? etc., etc." This line of questioning, when the individual has lost most of his critical

faculties, tends to creat a serious state of uncertainty. This has been demonstrated, when accompanying pressures were virtually nil, under experimental conditions.

The prisoner must suffer additional internal conflict when strong feelings of guilt are aroused within him. As any clinical psychiatrist is aware, it is not at all difficult to create such feelings. Military personnel are particularly vulnerable. No one can morally justify killing even in wartime. The usual justification is on the grounds of necessity or self-defense. The interrogator is careful to circumvent such justification. He keeps the interrogation directed towards the prisoner's personal moral code. (Why is the prisoner personally killing civilians and troops who have never done anything to him? Did he personally want to fight this war, or was he drafted?) Every moral vulnerability is exploited. (How does the prisoner feel about the fact that the weapons of war cannot be sufficiently controlled to guarantee the killing only of soldiers? Or did the "arms makers" design them that way? Does the prisoner really believe in fighting to support colonialism? Would the prisoner feel any obligation to support his country if an attack were made upon Mexico? How is this different from the Chinese position in Korea? What does the prisoner feel about the fact that the U.S. was the first to utilize nuclear weapons in

warfare? Does the prisoner support wholeheartedly all the policies of his government? If not, doesn't this war support some of the policies he does not approve? Is the prisoner a Christian? Does Christianity condone slaughter of the type meted out by air bombings?) Incessant questioning of this type tends to arouse many doubts based upon irrational guilt feelings. The prisoner begins to question the very fundamentals of his own value-system. One brainwashed priest reported that after interrogation he really began to feel intense guilt about the very missionary work to which he had devoted his entire life. Constantly, the prisoner must fight off a potential breakdown. He finds that his mind is "going blank" for longer and longer periods of time. He cannot think constructively. If he is to maintain any semblance of psychological integrity, he must bring an end to this state of interminable internal conflict. He signifies a willingness to write a confession.

If this were truly the end, no brainwashing would have actually occurred. The individual would simply have "given in" to intolerable pressure. Actually the final stage of the brainwashing process has just begun. No matter what the prisoner writes in his confession, the interrogator is not satisfied. The interrogator questions every sentence, every phrase of the confession. He begins to edit while working with the prisoner. The prisoner is

forced to argue against every change, every demand for increased self-incrimination. This is the very essence of brainwashing! The prisoner has begun to argue for maintaining statements that he would not have accepted prior to the commencement of brainwashing. Every time that he gives in on a point to the interrogator, he must rewrite his whole confession.* Still the interrogator is not satisfied. In a desperate attempt to maintain some semblance of integrity and to avoid further brainwashing, the prisoner must begin to argue that what he has already confessed is true. He begins to accept as his own the statements he has written. Subtly, step by step, he has identified with a new value-system. The prisoner uses many of the interrogator's earlier arguments to buttress his position. He believes what he has stated. By this process identification with the interrogator's

*That "simple Pavlovian conditioning" accounts for what occurs in the final stages of brainwashing is a common misconception. The major similarity between what happens to Pavlov's dog and what happens in brainwashing lies in the preparation of the dog for the conditioning experiment. Brainwashing can be likened much more fruitfully to the more complex concept of "instrumental avoidance conditioning" which requires that the animal "discover" a solution to avoid pain. It is much more difficult to "de-condition" an animal that has learned in this way. Actually brainwashing requires a creative act of learning (internal reorganization of the thought processes) on the part of the brainwash-victim. This does not imply that he could "help" learning any more than the child can "help" learning that fire is hot and should be avoided.

value-system becomes complete. It is extremely important to recognize that a qualitative change has taken place within the prisoner. The brainwash-victim does not consciously change his value-system; rather the change occurs despite his efforts. He is nc more responsible for this change than is an individual who "snaps" and becomes psychotic. And like the psychotic, the prisoner is not even aware of the transition.

An interesting point is raised by the behavior of returned prisoners-of-war who had been brainwashed during the Korean conflict. Some of these individuals stood court-martial; others were vilified in the press. One wonders why they did not say, "I was brainwashed -- I believed at the time what I said over the radio", in their own defense. Apparently they could not explain clearly what happened to them. One wonders if this inability to communicate their experience is related to a most interesting psychiatric finding that it is virtually impossible for a recovered schizophrenic to tell what a psychotic "state" is like. All that he can say is that it is unimaginably horrible. Similarly, some of the brainwashed have characterized their own experiences as "indescribable".

Aftermath

Since the changed value-system of the brainwash-victim has developed in a severely controlled environment when his critical

judgment was at its nadir, it can be considered, in a sense, like and "enforced schizophrenia". The victim literally "forgets" many of the events that occurred during the brainwashing process. If such an analogy is useful, it could be predicted that the brainwash-victim, once freed from oppressive controls and having recovered his critical faculties, would undergo a spontaneous reintegration and recovery with the passage of time. This appears to be the case. Accompanying this recovery of a value-system more consistent with his beliefs prior to brainwashing is the gradual recall of the various aspects of the brainwashing process itself.